

Recalling When the Political

By Art Buchwald

The Democrats in this country are in a turmoil. Do they support the President of the United States, the Vice President or the Department of Justice?

McNulty, an ardent Democrat, told me, "We've never had a problem like this. In the past, if you were against the President, automatically you were against the Vice President. And if you were the party out of power you never trusted the Department of Justice, either. But now that they're at each other's throats, I don't know whom to support."

"Do you have to support anybody?"

"Of course I do. What kind of American would I be if I didn't take sides?"

"Well, whose side are you on?"

"I tend to lean toward Agnew emotionally, though my sense of justice makes me want this matter settled in the courts."

"Don't you have any sympathy for the President?"

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"Of course. Nixon asked his Vice President to take a flying leap out of the window and Agnew refused to do it. It's very hard to run the country if your own Vice President doesn't follow orders."

"I'm not clear where you stand, McNulty."

"Neither am I. It's easy to put myself in the Vice President's position. No one wants to jump out of the window, even if he's ordered to do so by the President. At the same time, if he doesn't jump, the President may have no choice but to push him out."

"How do you know Nixon asked Agnew to take a flying leap out of the window?"

"Everyone knows *that*," McNulty said. "Don't forget there have been an awful lot of leaks coming out of the White House and the Justice Department. If we're to believe Agnew, there are people in the administration

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who are out to destroy him politically. I'm very sympathetic with him on this score. A man should not be tried in the press, particularly a Vice President."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, McNulty."

"At the same time a man must not be allowed to escape punishment if he's committed a crime, which I'm not saying Agnew did. Had the Justice Department been more vigilant about Watergate the American people would have known the truth about it at the very beginning."

"Who told you that?"

"Agnew said it last Saturday in California. He said the reason he was being persecuted was because the Justice Department botched Watergate."

"Do you agree with that?"

"Not if I believe Attorney General Richardson's

assurances that there is nothing personal in the grand jury hearings in Baltimore County, which could or could not produce an indictment of Agnew."

"I hope it doesn't," I said.

"I do, too, because it would place a great strain on President Nixon. It's not easy to keep the country's confidence when you have an indicted Vice President working for you, particularly one who won't resign."

"I hate to say this, but you seem to be fence straddling," I said.

"It isn't my fault. The Republicans got us Democrats into this dilemma. We've never had to choose up sides between *their* President and Vice President before. I tell you it's driving me crazy with grief."

"You're just saying that, McNulty. You seem to be enjoying the whole mess."

McNulty got into his car, lit up a big cigar, smiled and said, "Who me?"